

How to: Get Your Start in Art

Want to start an art collection but unsure where to start? Hamish Coney of Art + Object auction house gives the inside word.

ART COLLECTOR. It's one of those terms with a bit of allure. Big game hunter, undercover agent, art collector – all alpha type individuals with huge confidence and inside contacts – but most of all, The Knowledge. But although it might seem that clued-up collectors have some magic ability to spot new talent years before the rest of the market, the trick is really quite simple: they look at lots of art. Plus, they ask lots of questions and – most importantly – they back their 'eye'. Having confidence in your 'eye' is the chief requirement for any art collector. So in reality, the barrier to collecting is pretty low – well, apart from having the necessary readies to strike like a cobra when your 'eye' gives you the word.

At the big end of the art world you don't get much change out of \$100,000 if you are looking for a major work by past masters like Colin McCahon (probably no change, in fact), Gordon Walters or Frances Hodgkins. You'll also put a pretty big dent in \$100K if you're looking to acquire a significant work by current art stars such as Shane Cotton, Michael Parekowhai, John Reynolds, Seraphine Pick or Jacqueline Fraser. But don't despair. You can get underway with a few hundred bucks and many important works still sell for under \$3000. Here's how to get underway with a toe-dipping investment.

One: Be bold and buy your contemporaries. Go for an unknown but interesting young artist a few years out of art school. You're taking a punt but also getting the work of an exciting new talent. Young artists such as Tim Thatcher, Simon Esling, Richard Orjis, Edith Amituanai, Andrew Barber, Chris Clements, Megan Hansen-Knarhol and the young cluster of artists around Gambia Castle Gallery on Auckland's Ponsonby Road are ones to watch.

Two: Go digital. The next art revolution will be televised. New Zealand is a hotbed for great digital and video art, with many names to watch, including Jae Hoon Lee, Clinton Watkins, Sriwhana Spong, Steve Carr and plenty more neither you nor I have heard of yet. The work tends to be offered in small editions and is very reasonably priced. The artists are deliberately keeping their prices low to build a collector base, so get in now.

Three: Get stuck in. Go to all the gallery openings you can handle. In 2007 there is literally an opening every night of the week. Getting started is as simple as logging onto a gallery website and putting yourself on the emailing list. Soon you'll be jumping into the art moshpit and loving every minute. HC



"New Zealand is a hotbed for great digital and video art, with many names to watch."

TOP: *Peace Mantra* by Sriwhana Spong, courtesy of Anna Miles Gallery. MIDDLE: *One of These Days* by Jae Hoon Lee, courtesy of Starkwhite Gallery. BOTTOM LEFT: *Five Hours of Daylight* by Tim Thatcher, courtesy of Anna Bibby Gallery. BOTTOM RIGHT: *80m3 with Stick* by Chris Clements, courtesy of Mary Newton Gallery.

